Community Power Accelerator
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

AMERICAN MADE SOLAR PRIZE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Community Power Accelerator Prize Rules: Accessing Capital to Deploy Equitable Community Solar

Phase 2

THESE RULES ARE EFFECTIVE APRIL 2023 (OCT 2023 MOD)

Contents

1. Executive Summary

The Community Power Accelerator Prize is a **$10 million, three-phase prize** designed to fast-track the efforts of new, emerging, and expanding solar developers and co-developers to learn, participate in, and grow multiple successful community solar projects**.** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) launched Phase 1 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize in January 2023 and announced winners for the Phase 1 contest in April 2023. This document is for the Phase 2 contest, which runs from April 2023 to January 2024.

Through this prize, DOE seeks increase the number of equitable community solar projects by providing:

- **Tools and resources** to connect developers with private sector project financing for community solar projects using a standardized process.
- **Training** to understand the full cycle of community solar development, including site acquisition, community relations, customer acquisition, securing financing, costs, and the unique challenges and benefits of a community solar model.
- **Free consulting** services to competitors on the steps necessary to get a community solar project financed.
- **Coaching on expanding developers' solar customer markets** to include low-to-moderate-income populations, disadvantaged communities, and local workforce development, as well as increase resilience to power outages and household savings to make community solar projects attractive to the widest range of customers possible.

By the end of the prize, competitors will be ready to engage with the Community Power Accelerator online platform,[1] which provides a place for competitors to shop their credit-ready projects around to verified project developers, investors, and philanthropic organizations.

1.1 Who Can Participate?

Phase 2 of the Community Power Accelerator Prize is open to Phase 1 winners.

1.2 Prize Phases and Prizes to Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize has three phases (Ready!, Set!, and Grow!), which are designed to build capacity and guide developers through the steps required for successful community solar project development and financing via the Community Power Accelerator online platform.

Phase 1 (Ready! Contest) - CLOSED

Total Cash Prize: $50,000 per winning competitor

25 winning teams were selected for a cash award of $50,000 each. Winning teams have the opportunity to participate in Phase 2 of the prize.

[1] The Community Power Accelerator brings together investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition. This online platform will create a pipeline of credit-ready community solar projects—particularly those that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connect them with mission-aligned investors and philanthropic organizations to get funding. More information about the accelerator can be found in Appendix C or by visiting the accelerator website at https://communitypower.americanmadechallenges.org/.

Phase 2 (Set! Contest) – Now Open (April–January 2024)

Total Cash Prize: $200,000 per winning competitor

Up to 25 Phase 2 winners will be selected. Each winning team will receive a cash award of $200,000 and will have the opportunity to participate in Phase 3 of the prize. Phase 2 teams will participate in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab (see course schedule in Appendix C), a live, remote course designed to educate developers on community solar in disadvantaged communities.

Additionally, Phase 2 teams will be offered the opportunity to work directly with technical assistance coaches for free. Phase 2 teams will use this support to ensure their projects' readiness via the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) in Appendix B. Teams will use the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) to create and refine digital project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator platform. Teams will also work with their coaches to create an investor pitch deck (detailed in Section 6.6) to prepare for Phase 3.

Phase 2 will include an investor pitch event where winning teams will be invited to give 5-minute pitches about their organization, team, and Phase 2 portfolio of projects.

Teams must win Phase 2 to participate in Phase 3.

Phase 3 (Grow! Contest)[2]

Total Cash Prize: $150,000 per winning competitor

Anticipated Timeline: November 2023–August 2024

Up to 25 Phase 3 teams (winners of Phase 2) will be selected as Phase 3 winners, and each will receive a cash prize of $150,000. Phase 3 teams will begin to engage fully on the Community Power Accelerator platform—an online meeting place for community solar developers and investors—to shop their community solar projects with investors and philanthropic organizations. Using the Community Power Accelerator platform, competitors will secure investment commitments from investors and philanthropic organizations for a community solar portfolio (at least 1 megawatt [MW] direct current [DC]); each of the projects must include at least two of the five meaningful benefits (refer to Section 2.2).

1.3 Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 1 Opened	January 19, 2023
Phase 1 Submission Deadline	March 15, 2023, 5 p.m. ET
Phase 1 Winner Announcement	April 21, 2023
Phase 2 Opens	April 21, 2023
Phase 2 Learning Lab Training Courses Begin	April 27, 2023
Phase 2 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than January 12, 2024, at 5 p.m. ET.

[2] Phase 3 rules will be released prior to the contest opening date.

	Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either: • Aug. 29, 2023, by 5 p.m. ET • Jan. 12, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET. If a team submits to the Aug. 29 deadline and their submission is not selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the Jan. 12 submission deadline. The prize administration team anticipates that competitors will be notified of the winner decision **approximately 1 month following the submission deadline**.
Phase 2 Winner Announcement (Rolling)	November 2023–March 2024 (Anticipated)
Investor Pitch Event (Virtual)	February 2024 (Anticipated)
Phase 3 Opens (Rolling)	November 2023–March 2024 (Anticipated)
Phase 3 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	No later than August 30, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET
Phase 3 Winner Announcement (Rolling)	No later than October 2024

2. Background

The White House set a goal to achieve a decarbonized electricity system by 2035 and a decarbonized energy sector by 2050. To ensure an equitable clean energy transition, the White House also announced the Justice40 Initiative,[3] which directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including clean energy investments—to flow to disadvantaged communities (refer to Key Terms for definition).[4] Community solar will play a pivotal role in achieving these goals.

Recently, the U.S. government passed into law the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which is aimed at increasing energy production and accelerating energy innovation in the United States. It is expected that some projects developed by competitors participating in the Community Power Accelerator Prize may be able to take advantage of IRA tax credits and other project funding.[5]

2.1 What Is Community Solar?

Community solar[6] is a form of solar energy development that can allow all community members to access the benefits of renewable energy, particularly those with low to moderate incomes, renters, and those for whom traditional rooftop solar is unavailable. Equity is defined as consistent and systematic fair treatment, access, opportunity, justice, and advancement for all people, and community solar is one method of ensuring equity in the clean energy transition.

There are many different models for community solar, including community solar projects that are:

- Developed, owned, and administered by a utility.
- Developed and administered by private, third-party developers.
- Led, owned, and managed directly by subscribers, nonprofits, and community members. States or utilities often set guidelines for how community solar projects are developed and how subscriptions are managed, and these guidelines may vary widely across jurisdictions and utility territories.

Community solar is defined by DOE as any solar project or purchasing program in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups, within a certain geographic area. The community solar model can uniquely allow for the benefits of the development to go toward communities that have traditionally been left out of the transition to solar energy.

2.2 Community Solar Meaningful Benefits

One of the key goals of the Community Power Accelerator Prize is to support and grow a robust ecosystem of community solar project developers that incorporate meaningful benefits into projects across the United States. These benefits include low-to-moderate-income (LMI) household access, greater household

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[3] To learn more, visit the White House Justice40 Initiative website. See also Section 223 of Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.

[4] The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as census tract), or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native American or Alaska Native Village members), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for disadvantaged communities has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for 36 indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parentheses show how many indicators fall in that category): fossil dependence (2); energy burden (5); environmental and climate hazards (10); vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19).

[5] To learn more about the IRA, visit: https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/IRA-Energy-Summary_web.pdf.

[6] To learn more about community solar, visit: Community Solar Basics | Department of Energy.

savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development.

These five meaningful benefits provided by community solar subscriptions can build consumer trust and ensure that all U.S. households have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the clean energy transition.

Through the Community Power Accelerator Prize, DOE seeks to encourage community solar projects that can provide **at least two** of the following five meaningful benefits to subscribers and their communities:

LMI Household Access[7]	Projects include subscribers from LMI households.
Greater Household Savings	Projects provide a reduction in annual electricity bills and/or provide financial credits for all residential subscribers to a project.
Resilience and Grid Benefits	Projects include the capability to deliver power to households and/or critical facilities during a grid outage and/or strengthen grid operations through demand response and other actions.
Community Ownership	Projects include community ownership of, or equity in, project assets, which may include other wealth-building strategies such as community benefits agreements and tax equity investment models.
Equitable Workforce Development	Projects support community workforce development by advancing high-wage opportunities, reducing income disparities across demographic groups, ensuring a trained and available workforce that is reflective of the community, and creating a safe working environment and pathways to union membership. Projects also build trust and strengthen relationships with businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDIs).[8]

[7] See Key Terms for a definition of LMI Household Access.

[8] "Socially and economically disadvantaged individual (SEDI) demographics-related business" means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see Key Terms.

3. Prizes to Win

The Community Power Accelerator Prize will award up to $10 million in cash prizes to winning teams in the time frame shown below. In addition, teams may also receive nonmonetary recognition. DOE reserves the right to increase cash awards pending available funds.

Prize Phase	Duration	Anticipated Number of Awards	Dollar Amounts
Phase 1: Ready! (CLOSED)	2 months	Up to 25	$50,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: $1,250,000)
Phase 2: Set!	4–8 months	Up to 25	$200,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: $5,000,000)
Phase 3: Grow!	6 months (anticipated)	Up to 25	$150,000 per winning competitor (total prize pool: $3,750,000)

4. Eligibility Requirements

Competitors in the Community Power Accelerator Prize must comply with the eligibility requirements below. By uploading a submission package, competitors certify that they are in compliance with these eligibility requirements. Eligibility is subject to verification during a screening process and could result in an eligibility determination before awards are announced and payments are disbursed.

Only winners of Phase 1 are eligible to compete in Phase 2. Competitors are defined as individual entities (private, public, nonprofit, community-based, etc.) who are new community solar project developers, co-developers, or existing developers who are expanding operations, and who have concrete plans to develop a portfolio of equitable community solar projects, each with at least two of the five meaningful benefits discussed in Section 2.2.

4.1 Competitor Eligibility Requirements

Competitors participating in the Community Power Accelerator Prize must meet the following requirements:

1. Competitors must be a U.S. legal entity and are responsible for complying with all the rules of this prize challenge, including working with DOE and its Prize Administrator, submitting all required materials, and complying with all guidance and restrictions.
2. Projects must be based in the United States, or in U.S. territories.
3. Entities must be able to receive payments that are legally made from the U.S. government in U.S. dollars.
4. To receive prize money, the competitor must be a member of the National Community Solar Partnership. More information and a link to join the National Community Solar Partnership can be found at: https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/join-national-community-solar-partnership.
5. Community solar projects must meet the DOE definition of community solar, which is "a solar project or purchasing program, within a geographic area, in which the benefits of a solar project flow to multiple customers such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups."
6. The proposed projects must provide at least 40% of the power generated to residential customers; none of the projects can exclusively serve a single entity.
7. As part of teams' submission to this prize, teams will be required to sign the following statement:

> I am providing this submission package as part of my participation in this awards program. I understand that in providing this submission to the Federal Government, I certify under penalty of perjury that the named competitor meets the eligibility requirements for this awards program and complies with all other rules contained in the Official Rules document. I further represent that the information contained in the submission is true and contains no misrepresentations. I understand false statements or misrepresentations to the Federal Government may result in civil and/or criminal penalties under 18 U.S.C. § 1001 and § 287.

8. Organizations who have already completed the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab are not required to retake the course if they can show their Learning Lab Badge as proof of completion and meet the other eligibility criteria.
9. Although participation in this prize does not require competitors to have any competition-specific insurance, developers may be required to show proof of appropriate insurance coverage to receive financing.

10. Only one submission per Phase 2 competitor is allowed.
11. Competitors that plan to develop only a single community solar project are not eligible for this prize.
12. All submissions must have a unique set of projects that make up their proposed portfolio of existing or planned community solar projects. A single proposed project cannot be counted by multiple teams and may only appear once in any of the proposed portfolios of all teams.
13. Additional eligibility requirements can be found in Appendix A.12.

4.2 Program Goal Requirements

Only submissions relevant to the goals of this program are eligible to compete. The Prize Administrator must conclude that all the following statements are **true** when applied to a competitor's submission. If any of the following are not true, the submission will not be reviewed and will not be awarded.

- The competitor submission describes a Phase 2 community solar power portfolio of projects (two or more) representing, in aggregate, a minimum of 1 MW DC (not exceeding 5 MW DC for a single facility) of community solar projects[9] in the United States or in U.S. territories.
- For each project within the Phase 2 portfolio submitted, the team must describe how each project will include **at least two**[10] of the five meaningful benefits: (1) low-to-moderate-income household access, (2) greater household savings, (3) increased resilience and grid benefits, (4) community ownership, and (5) equitable workforce development.
- Eligible projects can be in any stage of prefinancing. Projects that already have financing may be considered eligible if the team intends to expand the scope of the project to include at least two of the five meaningful benefits.
- The benefits realized by the project cannot be dependent on pending legislation or regulation.

[9] DOE defines community solar as any solar project or purchasing program within a geographic area in which the benefits of the project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups.

[10] Individual projects within a portfolio do not all need to offer the same meaningful benefits. For example, Project A may provide low-to-moderate-income (LMI) household access and greater household savings, and Project B may provide increased resilience and grid benefits and community ownership.

5. Phase 1: Ready! Contest - CLOSED

On April 21, 2023, DOE announced the finalists in the Phase 1 Ready! Contest. The list of finalists can be found on HeroX.

6. Phase 2: Set! Contest Rules

6.1 Introduction

The Phase 2: Set! contest is the second in this three-phase series. A total of $5 million in cash prizes are available in Phase 2. Below are the rules for the Phase 2: Set! contest. Phase 2 is only open to winners of Phase 1.

Phase 2: Set! Benefits
All Phase 2 teams (i.e., those that won Phase 1 awards) are eligible to receive: • An opportunity to designate a single individual to participate for free in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course. • Free direct technical assistance in developing their project portfolio. • A cash prize award of $200,000 for completing the Phase 2 submission requirements. • An opportunity to participate in an investor pitch event to showcase their Phase 2 portfolio.

6.2 Phase 2: Set! Goal

The goal of Phase 2 is to build the capacity of new, emerging, and expanding community solar developers and co-developers and provide them with the tools and resources they need to develop a Phase 2 portfolio of two or more projects totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW DC of community solar projects (not to exceed 5 MW DC at a single facility) that each include at least two of the five previously described meaningful benefits.

By the end of Phase 2: Set!, successful teams will have:

- Completed the instructor-led Learning Lab course and received a digital badge.
- Worked with technical assistance coaches to ensure project readiness via the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) (Appendix B) and used that information about their projects to create and refine Phase 2 project profile(s) for a minimum of 1 MW DC (2+ projects) on the Community Power Accelerator platform.
- Created an investor pitch deck.

By the end of Phase 2, teams will be ready to fully engage in the Community Power Accelerator and begin to meet with potential investors to seek funding for their community solar projects.

6.3 Virtual Investor Pitch Event

Winners of Phase 2 will have an opportunity to participate in a virtual investor pitch event. The event will be held in February 2024 (anticipated). It is anticipated that teams will have approximately 5–7 minutes to present to an audience of Community Power Accelerator investors and supporters. Additional details about the virtual pitch event will be sent to teams during Phase 2.

6.4 Phase 2: Set! Important Dates

Description	Date
Phase 2 Opens	April 21, 2023
Phase 2 Learning Lab Training Courses Begin	April 27, 2023
Phase 2 Submission Deadline (Rolling)	Teams must submit their Phase 2 submission no later than January 12, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET. Phase 2 teams will have an opportunity to submit their submissions for evaluation on either: • Aug. 29, 2023, by 5 p.m. ET • Jan. 12, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET. If a team submits to the Aug. 29 deadline and their submission is not selected for an award, they will be allowed to resubmit their revised submission for the Jan. 12 submission deadline. The prize administration team anticipates that competitors will be notified of the winner decision approximately 1 month following the submission deadline.
Phase 2 Winner Announcement (Rolling)	November 2023–March 2024 (Anticipated)
Investor Pitch Event (Virtual)	February 2024 (Anticipated)

6.5 Phase 2 Prize Process

1. **Preparation, Activation, and Submission**: Potential teams should read the entire rules document and be familiar with the goals and submission requirements for the Phase 2: Set! contest.

   To compete for a Community Power Accelerator Phase 2 prize, teams must complete and submit—via the HeroX portal—documentation for the following requirements:

   - Cover page (selected questions will be displayed publicly)
   - Updated PowerPoint summary slide (public; updated from Phase 1)
   - Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course digital badge
   - Community Power Accelerator project profiles—minimum 1 MW DC (2+ projects)
   - Investor pitch deck
   - Phase 2 narrative
   - Letters of support.

   All submission materials must be uploaded to the Community Power Accelerator Prize HeroX page before the final Phase 2 submission deadline: Jan. 12, 2024, by 5 p.m. ET.

2. **Assessment:** The Prize Administrator screens submissions for eligibility and completion and assigns advisor expert reviewers to independently evaluate the content of each submission. The advisory reviewers may include federal and nonfederal subject matter experts with expertise in relevant areas. Advisory reviewers will review submissions and provide input to the Prize Administrator and DOE. The final determination of winners will take reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in Appendix A into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.
3. **Announcement**: Approximately 1 month following the submission deadline, the Prize Administrator will publicly announce the winners and send email notifications to both winners and non-winners. At this time, the Prize Administrator will request the necessary information to distribute cash prizes. Winners will then be eligible to compete in Phase 3.

Financial and Tax Requirements: Winning teams will be required to submit an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) W-9 form and automated clearing house (ACH) forms as well as sign a prize acceptance form in order for payment to be issued.

6.6 What to Submit

A complete submission package for the Community Power Accelerator Prize Phase 2: Set! contest should include the following items:

Item #	Content	Scored Item?	Total Points Possible
1	Cover page (will be made public)	Pass/Fail	-
2	Updated PowerPoint summary slide (will be made public)	Pass/Fail	-
3	Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course digital badge	Pass/Fail	-
4	Community Power Accelerator project profiles (1 per each project)	Yes	18
5	Investor portfolio pitch deck (not public)	Yes	24
6	Phase 2 narrative (not public)	Yes	24
7	Letters of support (optional)	No	-

Notes:

- All documents must be uploaded in PDF format.
- Portions of the submission package are made available to the public. These have been denoted as such. DOE does not intend to release the remaining parts of the submission to the public.

See Appendix A for additional details.

1. Cover Page (selected elements will be made public) Complete the basic information below about your organization and project portfolio. (to be completed via HeroX submission form)
• Submission (project) title (will be made public) • Submission Picture (.jpeg file format, will be made public) • Organization name (will be made public) • Organization city, state (will be made public) • Organization address • Organization nine-digit zip code • Organization website URL (will be made public) • Point of contact information (name, job title, email, phone) • Team members • Partner organizations • Portfolio details for each project: Project Name, Size in MW DC, City, State

2. PowerPoint Summary Slide (will be made public) One slide maximum Optional template available: https://www.herox.com/CommunityPowerAccelerator/resource/1290 **Allowable Upload Format:** .pdf, .ppt, .pptx
Teams must update their single-slide summary in PowerPoint that contains an overview of their organization and each of their Phase 2 community solar portfolio projects, including each project's size and location. An optional template is available for competitors to use, or they may update their summary slide from Phase 1. Text should be readable on a standard printout and conference room projection. Teams should not include any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information that is privileged or confidential on their summary slide.

3. Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab Course

The online Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course, hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide teams on how to develop community solar projects that serve low-income communities and further environmental and social justice. This intensive virtual course is real-time and instructor-led, features guest lecturers and expert speakers, and includes homework assignments.

The team member designated to take the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course must participate[11] in and complete all assignments for the course to receive the Learning Lab digital badge, which will serve as proof of completion. The Learning Lab course, as detailed in Appendix C, is a 10-week course that will be held from April 27 to June 2, 2023, with weekly live Zoom sessions on Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. ET. Competitors can expect to spend, including the weekly 90-minute group Zoom sessions, 8-10 hours per week working on assigned course activities.

The course will consist of regular, online Zoom meetings, and the cohort will receive live-streamed instruction, collaborate on homework assignments, and begin development of their community solar project(s). By the end of the Learning Lab cohort course, graduates will be able to:

1. Determine the appropriate role for their organization on the development team based on market need, partnership opportunities, and organizational capacity and appetite.
2. Assemble a development team capable of developing and managing a community solar project.
3. Develop and execute a robust business model and subscriber acquisition strategy that focuses on meaningful benefits.
4. Structure a creditworthy community solar project and pitch it for financing.

[11] If a participant fails to make a Zoom meeting or fails to complete the required learning activities, they must work with the instructor to develop and execute a make-up plan to ensure that they learn the materials presented during the missed session and/or required learning activities. If a participant misses more than two Zoom sessions, the Prize Administrator may decide not to award a participant the digital badge for completion of the course. All required learning activities must be completed and approved by the University of New Hampshire instructor by the end of the course.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">4. Community Power Accelerator Project Profiles</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Upload a PDF printout of your project profiles (2+) on the Community Power Accelerator website.

Teams will work with technical assistance coaches to ensure project readiness via the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) and will use the information to create and refine project profile(s) on the Community Power Accelerator website. For more information about the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) and how it relates to the Community Power Accelerator project profiles, please see Appendix B.

18 points possible

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teams should upload a PDF copy of each of their project profiles that have been uploaded to the Community Power Accelerator web platform. Please note that some questions may require additional details depending on the specific project.

Each project profile should include:

Project Details:
Project Name
Project Description
Where is the project geographically located?
What is the zip code(s) for the project?
What is the size (or projected size) of the project in capacity (kilowatts [kW])?
What is the expected generation in kilowatt-hours [kWh]?
Which type of installation is this community solar project using? Select all that apply.
In which utility’s service territory is the project located?
Have you completed the following steps in project development?
Site control – for example, a land lease or lease option agreement is in place.
The title to the site has been checked and is clean.
A preliminary grid / system impact study has been conducted by the local utility.
An interconnection agreement or permission to interconnect (or a notice to proceed (NTP)) from the applicable utility has been received.
The conditional use permit, and any ancillary permits, have received tentative approval by the local permitting authority.</td><td>Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):
Project Details: The information provided by the teams in the profile is credible and indicates that the team has performed sufficient due diligence on their projects to be ready for investment.
Team and Financial Information: The information provided by the team in the profile is credible and indicates that the team has performed sufficient due diligence on their projects to be ready for investment.
Equity Information: The information provided by the team in the profile is credible and indicates that the team has performed sufficient due diligence on their projects to be ready for investment.</td></tr>
</table>

• When is the project expected to receive permission-to-operate? • Do you have an innovative business plan or community solar model? • Is the project replicable in another location? **Team and Financial Information:** • Do you have a project team (such as legal, finance, engineering, etc.)? • What is the total estimated cost of the project? • What types of capital, and how much (USD$), has already been committed for this project/development? • How much capital (USD$) has the organization self-invested in the project? • Beyond the capital already committed and self-investment, what is the total amount of capital (USD$) being sought for project financing? • What kind and how much (USD$) financing are you seeking for this project? • What is your operations and maintenance strategy, and how will you fund these activities? • Do you have an input sheet or pro forma specific to this project that can be shared with potential capital providers? • Are you planning to sell this project? **Equity Information:** • Is this project intentionally designed to serve any specific communities and/or populations? Select all that apply. • Which Meaningful Benefits are applicable to your project? • What is the expected net savings per household that will be delivered to low- to moderate-income customers? __% • Is the project located within a Justice40 community, as identified by the Energy Justice Mapping Tool (https://energyjustic.egs.anl.gov/)? • For this project, which of the following has your organization started?	

5. Investor Pitch Deck [12] Create an investor pitch deck highlighting at least two projects (or more) within your project portfolio totaling, in aggregate, at least 1 MW DC that describes site details, business strategy, your organization, team, and financing needs. Max length: 30 slides *24 points possible* **Allowable Upload Format:** .pdf, .ppt, .pptx	
Teams should prepare an investor pitch deck presentation that provides an overview of their organization/team as well as highlights at least two of their projects for which they are seeking financing in Phase 2. Teams are encouraged to utilize the information from the Learning Lab and the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) (Appendix B) to inform their presentation. Teams should tailor their pitch decks to an investor audience. Teams should include the following information for each : 1. System Details a) Installation type: roof, ground-mount, canopy. b) System size (kW). c) Anticipated annual production (kWh/year). d) Utility power rate ($/kWh.) e) Power value (total $). Major equipment information: panels, racking, inverters. 2. Site Information a) What type of building or land is the project on? b) Who owns the building or land? c) What characteristics make the site a good site? d) What are some of the risks/concerns of the site? e) Utility service provider responsible for interconnection.	Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement): • The pitch deck is well-tailored for an investor audience and has relevant and comprehensive information that is presented in such a way that it would be attractive to a potential investor. • The pitch deck includes credible and well-defined information about the system details, timeline, site information, development team members, operations and maintenance, and risk. • The project financial summary and pro forma presented is credible, well-defined and is tailored to an investor audience. • The portfolio described is replicable and scalable. The team clearly and credibly describes how they are positioned for long-term success and additional development opportunities. • The team has a financially sustainable business model and subscriber acquisition/management strategy that will enable projects to provide expect profit and debt service for debt and equity investors while continuing to provide meaningful benefits to subscribers. • The pitch deck includes detailed and credible information about how the project will provide meaningful benefits and support disadvantaged communities.

[12] This submission item builds off the investor pitch deck presentation assignment for the learning lab (see Appendix C) but expands the scope of the presentation to include at least two Phase 2 projects that total 1 MW DC.

f) Relevant utility rules/regulations that allow for development and interconnection for your projects. Utility/state incentives. 3. Project Financials a) Total project cost. b) Sources. c) Which sources are already secured? d) Are terms sheets in place with other investors/lenders? e) Who is the borrower? f) What collateral is available to secure debt? g) Is the borrower able to provide guarantees? h) What is the specific lender/investor request? Additional information about scope, sources and uses, pro forma, and loans. 4. Development Timeline a) What is the current stage of the project? b) What work has been done to date? c) Provide an anticipated development timeline. 5. Development Team Members a) Organization chart. 6. System Operation and Maintenance Plans a) Describe your operations and maintenance plan. b) What are the ongoing maintenance costs? c) How are you hedging against solar performance risk? d) Has an O&M provider already been identified or contracted? 7. Subscriber Management Plan a) Explain your subscriber management plan. b) How are electricity sales being generated? c) Explain the process by which the project earns revenue.	

d) Any applicable state, federal, or local government revenue incentive programs used to finance your projects e) Forecasted power rates f) Are any subscribers already signed up? g) What are the expected upfront and ongoing costs of customer marketing/maintenance? h) How are you hedging against any customer nonpayment risk? i) How are you hedging against solar performance risk? 8. Community Benefits a) What percent of subscribers qualify as LMI (below 80% area median income)? b) What projected percent discount off the cost of utility power is being provided to LMI subscribers? • What are the total LMI resident savings per year? • Does the project provide other community benefits beyond discounted power? • Job training. • Prevailing wages. • Education on solar technology. • Resident services. • Resilience. • Community/cooperative ownership. 9. Describe any challenges, risks, or barriers that your team is currently facing or anticipates as they relate to project development or financing. How will you leverage innovative financing such as philanthropy (if needed)? a) Other information related to community benefits: amount of debt/equity, construction or permanent financing, interest rate, term, recourse/non-recourse. 10. Project Replication and Scalability	

a) What are your plans to scale your community solar development portfolio and replicate your model for additional/future projects? b) How will executing on this work set your team up for long-term success and additional development opportunities?	

6. Phase 2 Narrative

Answer each of the questions in the two areas listed below. The content bullets are only suggestions to guide your responses; you decide where to focus your answers. The individual answers to the two areas do not have a word limit; however, the aggregate response to these two areas must not exceed 2,500 words, not including captions, images, figures/graphs, and references. A word count must be included at the end of your submission. You may also include up to 5 supporting images, figures, or graphs. The reviewers will score the questions based on the content you have provided.

24 points possible

Allowable Upload Format: .pdf, .doc, .docx

1. Meaningful Benefits, Community Engagement, and Support to Disadvantaged Communities

18 points possible

Teams could include:	Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement):

• A description of how you are incorporating at least two of the five meaningful benefits[13] into each project included in your Phase 2 portfolio.
  ○ Why did you select the meaningful benefits that you are incorporating?
  ○ Include a SMART action plan[14] for how your team will implement, track, and measure the success and impact of the meaningful benefits that you plan to incorporate.
• An update on the specific activities that your team is doing to build trust, strengthen relationships, and provide direct benefits to the community, especially disadvantaged communities, and support socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDIs)[15] and Minority Owned and Women Owned Businesses.
  ○ How are you encouraging and supporting disadvantaged communities specifically (as opposed to communities generally) to become subscribers or owners of your community solar projects? How did
	• The competitor is actively working to support, encourage subscription from, and provide direct benefits[16] to disadvantaged communities, organizations, and individuals, such as SEDIs, Minority Owned and Women Owned Businesses.
	• The submission clearly describes how the project portfolio will incorporate at least two of the five meaningful benefits into each project and includes a well-considered and credible SMART plan for implementation and measuring success.
	• The competitor has included additional meaningful benefits over and above the required two (2 points for each additional benefit provided, up to 6 points total).

[13] Meaningful benefits include LMI household access, greater household savings, increased resilience and grid benefits, community ownership, and equitable workforce development and entrepreneurship.

[14] A SMART action plan incorporates five characteristics of a goal: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-based. For more information about SMART goal planning, please see: https://www.atlassian.com/blog/productivity/how-to-write-smart-goals.

[15] A *"SEDI demographics-related business"* means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances. For more information, see Key Terms (Phase 1 Rules).

[16] Direct benefits could include workforce development, community ownership, economic development, or other meaningful benefits.

your plan and activities diverge from your initial planning? ○ What lessons have you learned from your current engagement that could benefit others or help inform future projects?	
2. **Business Model Innovation, Risks and Barriers, and Strategy for Investment** *6 points possible*	
Teams could include: • Any potential project risks, challenges, or barriers that your team is currently encountering or anticipates for your project portfolio and how you plan to address or overcome them. • A description of unique or innovative methods that you are employing for business model and subscriber acquisition/management strategy that will contribute to your success in providing meaningful benefits. ○ How can you use your business model to replicate projects and scale your portfolio in the future? • A description of your strategy to get the attention of and meet with potential investors. ○ How will you leverage the Community Power Accelerator to facilitate your strategy? ○ What other resources and connections do you plan to leverage? ○ What type of investors (private investors, angel investors, philanthropic investors) do you anticipate engaging with, and how will you target your investment strategy to the types of investors you seek to attract? • What additional support to do you need to be successful in Phase 3? ○ How do you plan to find this additional support in Phase 3?	Judging criteria (1–6 points per statement): • The team clearly articulates what makes their business strategy unique, replicable/scalable, and poised for success with the support from the Community Power Accelerator platform and ultimately get funding for their projects.

7. Letters of Support (Optional) Allowable Upload Format: .pdf
Submit one-page letters of support, intent, or commitment from relevant entities (e.g., community members, utilities, partner organizations) to provide context. Letters of support from partners or others who are critical to the success of your proposed portfolio will likely increase your score. General letters of support from parties that are not critical to the execution of your portfolio will likely not factor into your score. Please do not submit multipage letters. Individual letters should be combined into a single PDF file.

6.7 How We Score

All items in the submission package, with the exception of the cover page and logistical questions, will be considered when scoring each submission. After reviewing all elements of the submission package, expert reviewers will assign a score between 1 and 6 for the criteria described in Section 6.6 taking into account the statements described under each. Each criterion will be weighted as described below.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

The Prize Administrator will ensure that all submissions are eligible to compete. The Prize Administrator reserves the right to remove evidence that contains personally identifiable information. The scoring of submissions will proceed as follows:

- **Screening.** The Community Power Accelerator Prize Administrator and DOE will screen each application for overall eligibility and completeness. Each submission must have the six main elements requested as part of the submission package:
    - Cover page (selected questions will be displayed publicly)
    - Updated PowerPoint summary slide (public)
    - Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course digital badge
    - Community Power Accelerator project profiles
    - Investor pitch deck
    - Phase 2 narrative
    - Letters of Support (optional).

  Only submissions that meet the eligibility criteria and include all four elements will be deemed as passing the Phase 2 screening.

- **Scoring.** A panel of expert reviewers reads, scores, and comments on each submission. There are four main categories of questions, each with subcategories. Each subcategory of the review criteria receives a score from 1 to 6. The final score from an individual reviewer for a submission package equals the sum of the scores for all the categories. Category points are cumulative. All reviewers' scores will then be averaged for a final reviewer score for the submission package. The final review process will consider reviewer scores when deciding the winners of the awards.

    - Reviewers are prohibited from having personal or financial interests in, or being an employee, officer, director, or agent of, any entity that is a registered participant in this contest or having a familial or financial relationship with an individual who is a registered team.

- **Reviewer comments.** Expert reviewers also provide comments on the submissions they review. The Prize Administrator intends to provide comments to teams after the winners are announced for each phase. These comments are intended to help teams continue to improve and iterate on their work. The comments are the opinions of the expert reviewers and do not represent the opinions of DOE.

- **Interviews**. The Prize Administrator may decide to hold a short interview with a subset of the teams. Interviews would be held prior to the announcement of winners and would serve to help clarify questions the Prize Administrator may have. Attending interviews is not required, and interviews are not an indication of winning.

The final determination of winners takes reviewer scores, discussions with reviewers (if applicable), interview findings (if applicable), and the program policy factors listed in Appendix A into account. DOE is the judge and final decision maker and may elect to award all, none, or some of the submissions accepted at each submission deadline.

7. Key Terms

Community Benefits Agreement: Community benefits agreements are legal agreements between community benefit groups and developers. These agreements stipulate the benefits a developer agrees to fund or furnish in exchange for community support of a project. Benefits can include commitments to hire directly from a community, contributions to economic trust funds, local workforce training guarantees, and more. These agreements can be used as a tool to garner community support.

Community Ownership: Community ownership allows community members, other individuals invested in supporting the community, and/or organizations that reflect the interests of those members to have equity ownership rights in a community solar project. Ownership is one method to allow community members to determine how a community solar project is developed and how its benefits are distributed. Additional benefits of community ownership can include local job creation, increased property values, and the retention of wealth within a community.

Where direct ownership of project assets is not possible or desirable, community solar may provide other wealth-building opportunities for subscribers and their communities through community benefit agreements or other innovative approaches to reinvest the monetary benefits of a community solar project back into the local community.

Community ownership has been identified as one strategy to increase energy democracy, which is one of the eight priorities of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Justice40 Initiative. As a pilot program of the Justice40 Initiative, the National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) is prioritizing, among other program benefits, the inclusion of community ownership and other community wealth-building in community solar projects.

Community Solar: Community solar is defined by the DOE as any solar project or purchasing program in which the benefits of the solar project flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups, within a certain geographic area.

Disadvantaged Communities (DACs): The Office of Management and Budget Interim Guidance defines a disadvantaged community as either a group of individuals living in geographic proximity (such as a census tract) or a geographically dispersed set of individuals (such as migrant workers or Native American or Alaska Native Village members), where either type of group experiences common conditions. The DOE working definition for DACs has been developed by an internal and external collaborative research process and includes data for 36 indicators collected at the census tract level. These 36 indicators can be grouped across the following categories (numbers in parentheses show how many indicators fall in that category): fossil dependence (2); energy burden (5); environmental and climate Hazards (10); and vulnerability (socioeconomic, housing burden, transportation burdens, etc.) (19).[17]

Equitable Workforce Development: The grid transformation required to meet the nation's clean energy goals presents substantial workforce development opportunities. Distributed energy projects like community solar can support more local jobs than large-scale, centralized projects. Additionally, clean energy jobs often pay above-average wages, even for low-wage workers.

Despite this opportunity, most solar companies have difficulty filling workforce vacancies, often due to lack of experience, training, or technical knowledge in the employment pool. To meet the nation's clean energy goal to decarbonize the electricity grid by 2035, the solar industry will need to grow by an estimated 500,000–1,500,000 jobs. Incorporating local workforce development into community solar

[17] https://www.energy.gov/diversity/justice40-initiative

projects or programs provides a unique opportunity to expose more people to careers in clean energy and contribute to growing local economies. Equitable and effective workforce development initiatives are industry-driven, employee-centric, and support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Workforce initiatives should support broad occupational training that leads to industry-recognized credentials and career-track employment. They should also provide pathways to jobs with family-sustaining wages and benefits, devoid of hostility and harassment, where workers are properly classified as employees, and have a free and fair choice to join, form, or assist a union.

Justice40: The Justice40 Initiative directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments—including investments in clean energy and energy efficiency; clean transit; affordable and sustainable housing; training and workforce development; remediation and reduction of legacy pollution; and the development of clean water infrastructure—to flow to disadvantaged communities. To learn more, visit the White House Justice40 Initiative website. See also Section 223 of Executive Order 14008: Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.

Low to Moderate Income (LMI): Definitions for LMI vary. This prize seeks projects that serve LMI populations. Submissions must identify the definition used. If the state where the project(s) or program are located has an applicable LMI definition, teams should use that definition. If the state does not have a definition for LMI populations, teams are encouraged to use the federal definition for LMI, which is households at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, or households earning 80% or below of the area median income, as defined by the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Low-to-Moderate-Income (LMI) Household Access: The cost of solar energy systems has fallen dramatically over the past decade. As solar electricity has become more affordable, residential solar adoption has increased, with more than 3.3 million solar energy systems operating across the United States at the end of 2021. Despite decreases in system costs, many U.S. households still lack access to affordable solar electricity, especially renters, homeowners who can't access affordable financing, and those without suitable roof conditions or adequate sun exposure. Although rooftop solar adoption has become more equitable relative to income over time, the *Solar Futures Study* found that only 31% of solar adopters came from households that earned less than the area median income. In addition, census tracts with majority Black and Hispanic populations exhibit 30% and 69% less rooftop solar adoption, respectively, compared to the average census tract.

As of 2021, 65 MW_{AC} of community solar capacity dedicated to serving LMI households was online, with more than 200 MW_{AC} in project queues, representing just over 5% of the 5.2 GW_{AC} of total installed community solar capacity. The Justice40 Initiative directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to flow to disadvantaged communities (DACs). Household income is one of 36 indicators used to determine whether a community is considered a DAC. As a pilot program of the Justice40 Initiative, NCSP is prioritizing, among other program benefits, the provision of at least 40% of new community solar capacity for LMI households.

(See "Low to Moderate Income" entry for guidance on how to define LMI households).

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs): MSIs are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations.[18]

National Community Solar Partnership (NSCP): The National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP), a program of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office, supports a coalition of stakeholders working to expand access to affordable community solar to every U.S. household and enable communities to realize

[18] https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program

its meaningful benefits. NCSP is working toward a 2025 target to enable community solar to power the equivalent of 5 million households and generate a cumulative $1 billion in energy bill savings. NCSP has over 1,200 partners who leverage peer networks and technical assistance resources to overcome barriers to expanding community solar access.

Although many investors have developed financial products to serve the community solar market, developers—especially new developers, co-developers, or those pursuing community ownership—often struggle to complete the necessary credit application requirements. A lack of expertise, experience, capacity, and pre-development funds to prepare the required application materials creates a gap in the deployment of community-led, community-focused community solar projects. The Community Power Accelerator Prize is designed to address these gaps and support and grow a strong network of solar project developers and co-developers that will support equitable community solar with meaningful benefits.

Native American Indian and Alaska Native Village Tribal Communities: As defined by the National Congress of American Indians, "There are 574 federally recognized Indian Nations (variously called tribes, nations, bands, pueblos, communities and native villages) in the United States. Approximately 229 of these ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nations are located in Alaska; the other federally recognized tribes are located in 35 other states. Additionally, there are state recognized tribes located throughout the United States recognized by their respective state governments."

Resilience and Grid Benefits: A resilient power system, as defined by the DOE Grid Modernization Initiative and the National Academy of Sciences, must be capable of lessening the likelihood of long-duration electrical outages occurring over large service areas, limiting the scope and impact of outages when they do occur, and rapidly restoring power after an outage. As extreme weather events become more common and place undue stress on electricity infrastructure, solar and other distributed energy resources can help communities rapidly recover. During extreme weather, the lack of resilient infrastructure to deliver energy can cost human lives as access to essential services is disrupted.

Community solar projects that are designed with resiliency and reliability in mind can be a decentralized source of energy for a community in the event of a grid outage or emergency. Community solar can enable communities to utilize solar-plus-storage or microgrids to prevent disruptions in power caused by extreme weather and other events, and to rapidly restore electricity to critical facilities or "island" segments of the distribution network if the grid goes down. Community solar projects that incorporate virtual power plants or other demand response actions can reduce peak load demand, making the larger grid more resilient. Community solar that is sited strategically may also be able to provide technical grid benefits, including the ability to improve voltages at the end of the feeder, alleviate congestion, and reduce line losses. Community solar projects may offer supplementary resilience benefits when they are co-located with resilience hubs that provide additional services to support community development and growth. Increasing equitable access to reliable sources of energy before, during, and after extreme events is a priority of the NCSP.

Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Individual[19]**:** A SEDI demographics-related business means a business owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished compared to others in comparable economic circumstances, due to their:

- Membership of a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society.

[19] https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/10/2022-04843/state-small-business-credit-initiative-demographics-related-reporting-requirements

- Gender.
- Veteran status.
- Limited English proficiency.
- Disability.
- Long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society.
- Membership of a federally or state-recognized Indian tribe.
- Long-term residence in a rural community.
- Residence in a U.S. territory.
- Residence in a community undergoing economic transitions (including communities impacted by the shift toward a net-zero economy or deindustrialization).
- Membership of an underserved community.

8. Additional Requirements

Please read and comply with additional requirements in Appendix A.

TEAMS WHO DO NOT COMPLY WITH THESE REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DISQUALIFIED.

Appendix A: Additional Terms and Conditions

A.1 Universal Contest Requirements

Submissions for The Community Power Accelerator Prize are subject to following terms and conditions:

1. The final content of a submission must be posted or uploaded via the form online at https://www.herox.com/communitypoweraccelerator before the awards close. Late submissions or any other form of submission do not qualify.
2. The narrative and portfolio questionnaire are not intended to be made public; however, see Section A.8 regarding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
3. All required elements must be included. The awards administrator may disqualify a submission after an initial screening if it fails to provide all required submission elements. Teams may be given an opportunity to rectify submission errors due to technical challenges.
4. Submissions must be in English. Any attachments must be in a readable and searchable PDF format. Scanned handwritten submissions will be disqualified.
5. Teams will be disqualified if, during any engagement with The Community Power Accelerator Prize, including but not limited to the submission, the online forum, emails to the awards administrator, or other forms of communication, contain any matter that, in the discretion of DOE, is indecent, lacking in professionalism, or demonstrates a lack of respect for people or life on this planet.
6. If you click "Accept" on the HeroX platform and proceed to register for the awards described in this document, these rules will form a valid and binding agreement between you and DOE and are in addition to the existing HeroX Terms of Use for all purposes relating to these contests. Teams should print and keep a copy of these rules. These provisions only apply to the contests described here and no other contests on the HeroX platform or anywhere else.
7. The awards administrator, when feasible, may give teams an opportunity to fix nonsubstantive mistakes or errors in their submission packages.

A.2 Submission Rights

The submission materials in this contest must be submitted and released to the public under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

By making a submission and consenting to the rules of the contest, a competitor is granting to DOE, the awards administrator, and any other third parties supporting DOE in the contest, a noncommercial license to display publicly only parts of the submission package designated as “public.” This license includes posting or linking to the public portions of the submission on the administrator’s or HeroX’s applications, on the contest website, DOE websites, and partner websites, and including the submission in any other media worldwide. The submission may be viewed by DOE, the awards administrator, and judges for purposes of the contests, including, but not limited to, screening and evaluation purposes. The awards administrator and any third parties acting on its behalf will also have the right to publicize the teams’ names and, as applicable, the names of the teams’ members and organizations that participated in the submission, on the contest website indefinitely.

By entering, the competitor represents and warrants that:

> The competitor is the sole, original author and copyright owner of the submission, or that the competitor has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any

copyright, trade secret, trademark, nondisclosure agreement, patent, or any other third-party rights; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.3 Copyright

Each competitor represents and warrants that the competitor is the sole author and copyright owner of the submission; that the submission is an original work of the competitor, or that the competitor has acquired sufficient rights to use and to authorize others, including DOE, to use the submission, as specified throughout the rules; that the submission does not infringe upon any copyright or any other third-party rights of which the competitor is aware; and that the submission is free of malware.

A.4 Contest Subject to Applicable Law

All contests are subject to all applicable federal laws and regulations. Participation constitutes each participant's full and unconditional agreement to these Official Contest Rules and administrative decisions, which are final and binding in all matters related to the contest. This notice is not an obligation of funds; the final awards are contingent upon the availability of appropriations.

A.5 Resolution of Disputes

DOE is solely responsible for administrative decisions, which are final and binding in all matters related to the contest.

In the event of a dispute, the authorized account holder of the email address used to register will be deemed to be the competitor. The “authorized account holder” is the natural person or legal entity assigned an email address by an internet access provider, online service provider, or other organization responsible for assigning email addresses for the domain associated with the submitted address. Teams and potential winners may be required to show proof of being the authorized account holder.

The awards administrator will not arbitrate, intervene, advise on, or resolve any matters between team members or any disputes between teams.

A.6 Publicity

The winners of these awards (collectively, “Winners”) will be featured on DOE and National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) digital, print, event, video, mobile, podcast, marketing, social media, and/or audio websites.

Except where prohibited, participation in the contest constitutes each winner's consent to DOE’s and its agents’ use of each winner's name, likeness, photograph, voice, opinions, and/or hometown and state information for promotional purposes through any form of media worldwide, without further permission, payment, or consideration.

A.7 Liability

Upon registration, all participants agree to assume and, thereby, have assumed any and all risks of injury or loss in connection with or in any way arising from participation in this contest or development of any submission. Upon registration, except in the case of willful misconduct, all participants agree to and, thereby, do waive and release any and all claims or causes of action against the federal government and its officers, employees, and agents for any and all injury and damage of any nature whatsoever (whether existing or thereafter arising; whether direct, indirect, or consequential; and whether foreseeable or not),

arising from their participation in the contest, whether the claim or cause of action arises under contract or tort.

In accordance with the delegation of authority to run this contest delegated to the Director of the DOE Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO), the Director has determined that no liability insurance will be required of teams to compete in this competition, per 15 USC 3719(i)(2).

A.8 Records Retention and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

All materials submitted to DOE as part of a submission become DOE records. Any confidential commercial information contained in a submission should be designated at the time of submission.

Teams are encouraged to employ protective markings in the following manner:

1. The cover sheet of the submission must be marked as follows and must identify the specific pages containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential:

   Notice of Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data:

   Pages [list applicable pages] of this document may contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and is exempt from public disclosure. Such information shall be used or disclosed only for evaluation purposes. The Government may use or disclose any information that is not appropriately marked or otherwise restricted, regardless of source. [End of Notice]

2. The header and footer of every page that contains trade secrets or privileged commercial or financial information must be marked as follows: “May contain trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential and exempt from public disclosure.”

3. In addition, each line or paragraph containing trade secrets or commercial or financial information that is privileged or confidential must be enclosed in brackets.

Teams will be notified of any FOIA requests for their submissions in accordance with 29 C.F.R. § 70.26. Teams may then have the opportunity to review materials and work with a FOIA representative prior to the release of materials.

A.9 Privacy

Teams that provide HeroX with personal information by registering or completing the submission package through the contest website understand that such information will be transmitted to DOE and may be kept in a system of records. Such information will be used only to respond to teams in matters regarding submissions and/or the contest, unless teams choose to receive updates or notifications about other contests or programs from DOE on an opt-in basis. DOE and NREL are not collecting any information for commercial marketing.

A.10 General Conditions

DOE reserves the right to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the contest, or any part of it, at any time. If any fraud, technical failures, or any other factor beyond DOE’s reasonable control impairs the integrity or

proper functioning of the contests, as determined by DOE in its sole discretion, DOE may cancel the contest.

Although DOE indicates that it will select up to several winners for each category, DOE reserves the right to only select teams that are likely to achieve the goals of the program. If, in DOE's determination, no teams are likely to achieve the goals of the program, DOE will select no teams to be winners.

ALL DECISIONS BY DOE ARE FINAL AND BINDING IN ALL MATTERS RELATED TO THE CONTEST.

A.11 Program Policy Factors

While the scores of the expert reviewers will be carefully considered, it is the role of the awards administrator to maximize the impact of contest benefits. Some factors outside the control of teams and beyond the independent expert reviewers' scope of review may need to be considered to accomplish this goal. The following is a list of such factors. In addition to the reviewers' scores, the below program policy factors may be considered in determining winners:

- Geographic diversity of potential winners.
- Diversity in project or program type (state program, utility-led program, third-party-developed project, community-owned project, etc.).
- Whether the DOE recognition is nonduplicative and compatible with the stated goals of this program and DOE's mission.
- The degree to which the submission will accelerate the adoption of best practices to provide meaningful, transformational changes in equitable access to community solar energy and its benefits among audiences and in areas that are underserved by existing efforts by the U.S. solar market.
- The degree to which the submission supports and complements DOE's existing programs and strategies to achieve DOE goals.
- The degree to which the submission expands DOE's engagement with new audiences and recipients that have not been supported by DOE in the past.
- The degree to which the submission highlights a new developer who has unique potential and ability for development without prior development experience.
- The degree to which the submission exhibits team member diversity and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, with participants including, but not limited to, graduates and students of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs), members operating within Qualified Opportunity Zones or other underserved communities, or members from minority business enterprises, minority-owned businesses, woman-owned businesses, or veteran-owned businesses.

A.12 Additional Eligibility Requirements

1. Individuals who worked at DOE (federal employees or support service contractors) within six months prior to the submission deadline of any contest are not eligible to participate in any awards contests in this program. Additionally, members of their immediate families (i.e., spouses, children, siblings, or parents) and anyone who lives in their household, regardless of relation, are not eligible to participate in the Prize.
2. Entities and individuals publicly banned from doing business with the U.S. government, such as entities and individuals debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participating in federal programs, are not eligible to compete.

3. Entities identified by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS's) Binding Operational Directives (BOD) as an entity publicly banned from doing business with the United States government are not eligible to compete. See https://cyber.dhs.gov/directives/.
4. Entities and individuals identified as a restricted party on one or more screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State, and the Treasury are not eligible to compete. See the Consolidated Screening List: https://www.trade.gov/consolidated-screening-list.

A.13 Return of Funds

As a condition of receiving a prize, teams agree that if the prize was awarded based on fraudulent or inaccurate information provided by the competitor to DOE, DOE has the right to demand that any prize funds or the value of other noncash prizes be returned to the government.

Appendix B: Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) and Community Power Accelerator Project Profiles

What Is the Credit-Ready Workbook?

The Credit-Ready Workbook integrates the Credit-Ready Checklist into a user-friendly format that teams will use throughout Phase 2 as they work to develop their community solar portfolios.

Addressing the subjects in Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist), will indicate to investors and funders that a solar development is ready to be financed. The checklist includes a list of 47 rigorous project requirements that investors look for before they are willing to fund a project. The project requirements were developed in collaboration with over 40 financial institutions familiar with solar lending and tax equity, including commercial banks, community development financial institutions (CDFIs), green banks, credit unions, private investors, and developers. Investors that sign up to participate in the Community Power Accelerator platform are specifically interested in funding community solar projects and have agreed to consider funding projects that use the Credit-Ready Workbook. The workbook includes information about system size, site control and permitting, ownership, capital structure, revenues, and costs.

By the end of Phase 2, teams will use the information from the workbook to complete project profiles on the Community Power Accelerator website, which is a part of their required Phase 2 submission. Below is a table that maps the requirements of the workbook (checklist) to the Community Power Accelerator website project profiles.

A detailed chart showing the connection between the Credit-Ready Workbook (Checklist) and the Community Power Accelerator Project Profiles is available on HeroX.

Appendix C: Phase 2 Learning Lab Course

C.1. Overview

Teams who are selected as Phase 1 winners will have the opportunity to participate as Phase 2 teams and enroll one team member in the Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course. To win Phase 2, each Phase 2 team must have a member participate in classes starting **April 27, 2023**.[20]

The Community Power Accelerator Learning Lab course, hosted by the University of New Hampshire, will deliver practical information to guide community-based, mission-driven, and LMI-focused organizations on how to develop community solar projects that serve low-income communities and further environmental and social justice. This intensive virtual course is instructor-led, features guest lecturers and expert speakers, and includes homework assignments.

The University of New Hampshire will provide a digital badge to participants who have satisfied all course expectations as a community solar development professional.

Please note that Learning Lab information is subject to change.

C.2 Learning Lab Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, graduates will be able to:

1. Determine the appropriate role for their organization on the development team based on market need, partnership opportunities, and organizational capacity and appetite.
2. Assemble a development team capable of sponsoring, financing, developing, and managing a community solar project.
3. Package a viable community solar project.
4. Structure a creditworthy community solar project and pitch it for financing.

C.3 Learning Lab Course Participant Expectations

The expectations of Phase 2 teams who are participating in the course are:

- Be prepared for class by carefully reviewing course materials and readings and completing assignments in advance, taking an estimated 8–10 hours per week.
- Complete the course final projects as described in the syllabus.
- Attend all eight 90-minute Zoom sessions.[21]
- Engage in the learning content and encourage and support your peers in the Learning Lab.
- Keep cameras on during the Zoom sessions (to build our learning community), unless extenuating circumstances make that impossible.

[20] If a member of a Phase 2 team has already graduated from the Learning Lab course and submitted their digital badge, they are not obligated to register for and attend the April course (although they can if they would like to).

[21] If a participant is unable to make a Zoom session due to extenuating circumstances, they will be required to notify the instructor with at least 24 hours' advance notice and make a reasonable accommodation for how to make up the materials for that week. If a participant misses more than two Zoom sessions, the Learning Lab instructor, in coordination with the Prize Administrator, may decide not to award a participant the digital badge for completion of the course.

C.4 Phase 2 Learning Lab Dates and Course Content

Below are the anticipated Phase 2 Learning Lab dates:

Week	Dates	Zoom Meeting Date	Course Content
Week 1	April 24–28, 2023	Thursday, April 27, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Welcome section on Canvas (1 hour) and welcome Zoom meeting (1.5 hours)
Week 2	May 1–5, 2023	Thursday, May 4, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Regulatory and Market Context for Community Solar
Week 3	May 8–12, 2023	Thursday, May 11, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Community Solar Site Selection
Week 4	May 15–19, 2023	Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:30–1:30 p.m. ET	Community Engagement for Community Solar
Week 5	May 22–26, 2023	Thursday, May 25, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Community Solar Development Process and Contracts
Week 6	May 29–June 2, 2023	Class will be invited to an "office hours" Zoom session and technical assistance sessions with groups as appropriate.	Catch-Up Week
Week 7	June 5–9, 2023	Thursday, June 8, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Community Solar Financial Modeling – Part 1
Week 8	June 12–16, 2023	No Zoom session this week; instead, the instructor will have one-on-one Technical Assistance sessions with each group.	Community Solar Financial Modeling – Part 2
Week 9	June 19–23, 2023	Thursday, June 22, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Community Solar Asset Management and Operations
Week 10	June 26–30, 2023	Thursday, June 29, 2023 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. ET	Put Your Knowledge Into Action: Community Solar Business Development

Appendix D: Background on the Community Power Accelerator Program

The Community Power Accelerator is an initiative of the National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP)[22] that brings together investors, philanthropic organizations, developers, community-based organizations, and technical experts in one online ecosystem to accelerate the deployment of the funds needed to drive a more equitable clean energy transition.

This online platform makes it easier for developers, community-based organizations, lenders, and philanthropic organizations to identify and connect with each other based on criteria that each participant will include in their profiles. It creates a pipeline of credit-ready community solar projects—particularly those that provide benefits to underserved communities—and connects them with mission-aligned investors and philanthropic organizations to get funding.

The goal of the Community Power Accelerator is to facilitate and finance more community solar projects that provide the meaningful benefits identified by NCSP:

- LMI household access
- Greater household savings
- Resilience and grid benefits
- Community ownership
- Equitable workforce development and entrepreneurship.

The Community Power Accelerator is designed to help achieve this goal by helping new community solar developers, co-developers, and existing developers looking to expand their operations to:

- **Gain expertise**: Designed for new, small developers and community-based organizations, our Learning Lab offers online training to get you ready to start a new community solar project or program.
- **Prepare projects for funding**: Our Credit-Ready Checklist, developed with experienced solar investors, will walk you through the requirements for getting your project prepared for funding.
- **Plan your projects:** We provide free consulting services on completing the Credit-Ready Checklist.
- **Focus on equity:** We advise you on incorporating meaningful benefits for communities into your project plan and recruiting equity-focused investors and philanthropic organizations.
- **Get projects funded:** Our online platform provides a place to shop your credit-ready projects around to verified project developers, investors, and philanthropic organizations.

The Community Power Accelerator and its resources are free and open to all community solar developers, philanthropists, and investors, regardless of their participation in the Community Power Accelerator Prize.

This is the end of the rules document. Thank you for reading.

[22] Learn more and sign up for the NCSP here: https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/join-national-community-solar-partnership.